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Harvard Professor Slams Israeli Lobby

By Michael Collins Piper

It's received little attention among Americans who don't follow public affairs — and it's not been widely mentioned in the media across the country, at least thus far — but among informed folks who closely follow the intrigues of the Israeli lobby, the release of a new report critical of Israel and its lobby has been the most talked-about subject of recent days.

Two of the most distinguished foreign policy specialists in the American academic world — John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago and Stephen Walt of Harvard — have released a paper, entitled "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy" that has some less than favorable things to say about Israel and the U.S. relationship with that tiny, yet powerful, foreign nation.

The 83-page paper, which includes some 40 pages of detailed footnotes, was first published on the Internet, but a pared-down rendition of the paper was published on March 23 in ***The London Review of Books***. The article can be found on the internet at www.ssrn.com or at Harvard's official web site, www.ksg.Harvard.edu/research/working_papers/index.htm.*

Ironically, as the New York-based newspaper, ***Forward***, put it on March 24, "there's little that's new" in the report. Anyone who has been a reader of ***American Free Press*** or who, going back to the 1960s and 1970s, read other populist publications like ***Liberty Letter*** or ***The Spotlight*** knows what's now being reported by the two academics.

Although America's mainstream media always portrayed Israel in the fondest light, free thinkers raised uncomfortable questions that suggested the truth might be different. Such critics of the U.S.-Israel axis were called "anti-Semites," and "neo-Nazis" and "haters."

Worldwide, in contrast, Israel and its American lobby have not been held in such esteem. In 2002, for example, South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who — until then — was an icon of the American press, shocked many when he asserted that in the United States "the Israeli government is placed on a pedestal," because, Tutu said, "the Jewish lobby is powerful — very powerful."

Now Meirsheimer and Walt have stepped up to echo what critics of Israel have been saying for years. However, what is disturbing to pro-Israel forces is that the academics, as ***Forward*** put it, "can't be dismissed as cranks outside the mainstream." As the Jewish weekly put it: "They are the mainstream."

Walt has not only been a Harvard professor, but he's also the outgoing academic dean of the university's John F. Kennedy School of Government which ***Forward*** acknowledged is "the nation's most prestigious center of political studies."

In the wake of the firestorm directed at Harvard, the professors removed the Kennedy School logo from the paper on the Internet. Despite this, as the paper's critics have noted, the genie is out of the bottle and copies of the paper have been flying across the globe via email.

As a result, a lot of people who previously were told that criticism of Israel was the work of "haters" and "extremists" are learning that two of the most respected American foreign affairs specialists are saying some tough things about Israel, its Washington lobby and the dangers of the lobby's influence on U.S. foreign policy making.

On March 25, the fiercely pro-Israel "Editorial Board" column of ***The Wall Street Journal*** (WSJ) took the professors to task but accurately noted that:

> [The premise of Mearsheimer and Walt] is that Israel is a huge strategic liability for the U.S. which wrecks our reputation in the Arab world, complicates our diplomacy at the UN, inspires Islamic fanaticism and terror, goads us into misbegotten wars and makes us complicit in Israeli human rights abuses, all the while costing some $3 billion a year.

Although the WSJ asserted Mearsheimer and Walt are not necessarily "anti-Semitic," their paper is "anti-Semitic in effect."

Meanwhile, pro-Israel elements are touting the claim by another Harvard professor, pro-Israel agitator Alan Dershowitz, that the two largely relied on material on "neo-Nazi" and "anti-Semitic" web sites as their sources.

Dershowitz is not telling the truth. The most cursory examination of the citations used by the duo demonstrates they used thoroughly "mainstream" sources as documentation. ***The Washington Post***, ***The New York Times***, Israel's ***Ha'aretz***, the New York-based ***Jewish Week***, and the aforementioned ***Forward*** were prominent among the sources.

In the meantime, on March 26, ***The New York Daily News***, owned by Mort Zuckerman, former chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations — a major force in the Israeli lobby — featured a commentary making the claim that "there is no Israel 'lobby.'"

Zuckerman's tabloid repeated the old saw that Congress and American presidents have been friends of Israel "out of humanitarian concerns" and that the policies have nothing to do with any powerful "lobby."

However, that claim is refuted in the very first footnote in the Mearsheimer-Walt report, which says: "The mere existence of the lobby suggests that unconditional support for Israel is not in the American national interests. If it was, one would not need an organized special interest group to bring it about. But because Israel is a strategic and moral liability, it takes relentless political pressure to keep U.S. support intact."

And so it is.

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